

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9048
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES ITALY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 2507

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MT, LY, AG
SUBJ: MALTA'S LIBYAN OPTION

REFS: A) VALLETTA 02585, B) STATE 204506, C) TRIPOLI 1120

1. SUMMARY: GEOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL RIVALRIES AND LACK OF LIBYAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES LEAD EMBASSY TO DOUBT LIBYA IS LIKELY TO ESTABLISH HEGEMONY OVER MALTA AT EARLY DATE. GIVEN RELAXED STANCE TAKEN HERE BY MORE DIRECTLY CONCERNED EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES, BELIEVE BEST U.S. POLICY IS "WAIT AND SEE." END SUMMARY.

2. BECAUSE IT IS LOCATED IN ITS MEDITERRANEAN "TURF", GOA REGARDS
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MALTA WITH SPECIAL INTEREST. EMBASSY BELIVES, HOWEVER, GOA WOULD VIEW CLOSER MALTESE-LIBYAN TIES WITH AMBIVALENCE. ON THE ONE HAND, IT WOULD APPLAUD MALTA'S CLOSER AFRICAN RELATIONS TO DETRIMENT OF TIES WITH WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE AND WOULD WARMLY ANTICIPATE STRONGER MALTESE SUPPORT FOR POLICIES JOINTLY FOLLOWED BY ALGERIA AND LIBYA.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, GOA IS WARY OF GROWTH OF LIBYAN INFLUENCE IN AREA. WHILE POLICIES OF BOTH NATIONS OFTEN COINCIDE, PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE HAS LITTLE LOVE OR RESPECT FOR HIS NEIGHBOR QADHAFI. INDEED, GENERAL CONVERGENCE OF VIEW IN SUCH AREAS AS MIDDLE EAST, NIEO AND WESTERN SAHARA CURRENTLY PAPER OVER STRONG BASIC ALGERIAN-LIBYAN RIVALRY. BOUMEDIENE PERSONALLY DISLIKES QADHAFI WHOM HE CONSIDERS BRASH, EXTREMIST AND FANATICAL. LIBYAN MACHINATIONS IN CHAD (EVEN WITH TEMPORARY GOA ACQUIESCENCE), QADHAFI'S ETHNIC TIES TO SAHARAN CLANS AND HIS ON-GOING PARADOXICAL RELATIONS WITH THE MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENTS ALSO CONCERN BOUMEDIENE. GOA HAS LARGE STAKE IN ANY POSSIBLE FUTURE MOVEMENT TO UNITE ALL SAHARAN PEOPLES UNDER ON FLAG. AS RESLUT, GOA MAY WELL BE PLEASED QADHAFI IS LOOKING NORTH-WARD TO FISH IN MALTESE WATERS RATHER THAN CREATING SAND STORM IN SOUTH. NEVERTHELESS, GOA WOULD NOT RELISH GREATLY ENHANCED MALTESE ROLE FOR LIBYA WHICH IT SEES AS POTENTIAL POWER RIVAL.

4. AS FOR OUR WESTERN EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES HERE, THEY ARE DEDICATED "ALGERIA WATCHERS" WITH LITTLE DEMONSTRATED INTEREST IN MALTESE-LIBYAN OR MALTESE-EUROPEAN RELATIONS.

5. GIVEN RECENTLY REPORTED LIBYAN PAYMENTS PROBLEMS AND INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF LOW MILITARY MORALE, LACK OF TRAINED MILITARY PERSONNEL AND NON-OPERATIONAL MILITARY EQUIPMENT, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT LIBYA COULD ASSIST MALTA TO DEGREE THAT WOULD THREATEN SECURITY OF REGION.

6. SOVIET INFLUENCE IN EQUATION DOES NOT PRESENTLY SEEM TO POSE
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CRITICAL THREAT. QADHAFI, LIKE BOUMEDIENE, APPEARS TO BE DEDICATED NATIONALIST WHO BAULKS AT BECOMING, IN FACT OR IN APPEARANCE, SOVIET MILITARY OR POLITICAL SURROGATE.

7. IN SUM, EMBASSY BELIEVES CONCERNED PARTIES SEEM TO BE FOLLOWING COUNTERVAILING INTERESTS WITH LITTLE LIKELIHOOD THAT ANY, INCLUDING LIBYA, WILL BECOME SUPREME. FOR TIME BEING, WE BELIEVE BEST U.S. POLICY IS TO "WAIT AND SEE", LETTING OUR WESTERN EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES WITH GREATER GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL TIES TO MALTA TAKE THE LEAD. HAYNES

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